

Residents Weigh in on Future of CPA

By MORAG MACLACHLAN

Five residents who had been instrumental in bringing the Community Preservation Act to town five years ago critiqued the work of the Community Preservation Committee on Thursday morning.

David Hines, Ed McGlinchey, Angela Scieszka, Kay Foster and Ruth Rowley gathered in the Mural Room with the CPC to share their opinions of the committee's work thus far and ways it could improve for the next five years.

"We're concerned the new projects being presented [to the CPC for CPA funds] are very expensive and do not represent the priorities of the CPA," Hines said. "We feel you need a set of guidelines showing the intentions of the voters relative to spending. We want to make sure all the legs are equally funded and that constituents know it's not an unlimited fund."

The three legs of CPA funding are open space, historical preservation and affordable housing. Hines praised the committee for its work in saving the O'Neil Farm, the Delano property and restoring the Island Creek Fish Ladder and roof on the King Caesar House. However, a couple of residents felt recent projects, such as the Wright Building and the Tarklin Community Center, should not have CPC support.

"Tarklin is a town building. It's a town decision. It should not be a CPA project just because the money is there," Foster said.

"Some projects, like Tarklin, use CPA funds as a substitute for the town," Scieszka said. "They look to CPA funds to substitute what the town should be spending. This happened with the Wright Building to some extent, too."

Hines suggested the CPC consider crafting guidelines for hearing project proposals. He said he wanted to prevent the situation that just occurred in Hingham when



CPC Vice Chairwoman Pat Loring thanked the five residents who came to the committee's meeting last Thursday morning for sharing their thoughts about how the group should operate in the future.

voters moved to close down the CPA.

"What is happening is akin to a feeding frenzy. People are wanting full funding, which could create voter backlash," Hines said. "I think we are at a tipping point. Developing a set of guidelines makes your job easier and it gives the town something to work with."

CPC Chairwoman Pat Loring said the CPC has no control over what projects are brought before the committee.

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"Before it was open space and now it's historic preservation. We get an uneven amount of projects," Loring said. "Guidelines would probably help."

Hines suggested the CPC take a five-year look at its goals, starting with a town-wide survey to determine how voters viewed the division of CPA funds totaling about \$2 million annually.

"This issue is making the program match what the vast majority of people want," Hines said.

CPC member Tony Kelso said he was concerned that as

more towns and cities adopted the CPA, that the state match of 100 percent would change. Foster disagreed.

"The trend is that towns don't seem willing to tax themselves to join," Foster said.

She added that in the past, the CPC had purchased properties, knowing the money to fully fund the project was forthcoming. Foster suggested instituting a moratorium to build up a reserve. CPC Treasurer George Wadsworth and CPC member Sarianna Seewald disagreed with Foster, saying that land acquisition was timely, and waiting to move on this type of project could mean losing the parcel altogether. In response to building a reserve, Wadsworth said the CPC did not have many requests for Annual Town Meeting this coming March, which meant reserves could be built.

Scieszka suggested that the CPC buy land and set it aside for future projects.

"The CPA could be a fund to buy land for open space, historical preservation and housing," Scieszka said. "Buy the land and put it aside until the project is ready to go. It's a simple, clean approach to the three tiers."

Rowley asked the CPC to

be firm with applicants that their proposed projects be well thought out and held during a public hearing so that the townspeople could provide input.

"The atmosphere we are in is 'I've got an idea. I'll get the money and then think about the wrinkles,'" Rowley said. "The CPC needs to say 'don't bring us an idea unless it's been thought through.'"

McGlinchey, who used to be a member of the CPC, said the committee's approach to presenting articles at town meeting needs to change as well to ensure that the board is neutral and only offers its recommendation, allowing the group making the proposal to speak on town meeting floor. Hines said he and the other residents who attended the CPC's meeting on Thursday would be willing to help the CPC administer a survey about the CPA fund to the town as well as research how other towns are coping with the next five years.

Loring said she appreciated the five residents' input and promised that the CPC would have a discussion about goal setting.



David Hines, Ed McGlinchey, Angela Scieszka, Kay Foster and Ruth Rowley asked the CPC to create guidelines for hearing requests for CPA funding.